PRACTICAL SOCIAL WORK

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Applied Psychology for Social Workers

Second Edition

**Paula Nicolson
and
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For Hilary Wild

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Polytechnic of East London

PAULA NICOLSON

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ROWAN BAYNE

Introduction

Since the first edition of this book, there have been several changes in the disciplines of social work and psychology. Social work has incorporated much of what we call psychology, as distinct from psychoanalysis, into its own theory and practice. Paradoxically, this has meant that psychology teaching on social work courses continues to be seen as an additional (if not 'optional') extra, and social workers now embrace such areas as 'behavioural social work' and 'cognitive therapy' as their own. As psychologists we are left with mixed feelings. On the one hand it is a positive achievement that mainstream academic psychology should contest the supremacy of psychoanalysis, which so heavily engulfed social work theory and practice in the 1950s and 1960s. On the other hand, the more vigorously social work theory claims psychological approaches for its own, the less significance the subject of psychology has for social workers.

This is not something that should only concern boundary jealous psychologists. We believe that it is the co-existence and cross-fertilisation of distinct disciplines that are to their mutual advantage, and argued this strongly in the first edition for both psychology and social work.

Psychology and social work have their individual strengths and different emphases. The study of psychology provides a framework for explanation of human behaviour and a particular set of professional practices. Social work is a practice-based profession which is informed by various disciplines – including psychology.

In this revised edition, we want to identify the progress which has been achieved over the last six years, and show how initiatives within the profession of psychology and those derived from psychological research will benefit social work educators, field work supervisors, students and practitioners.

We have therefore attempted two main tasks. Firstly to provide an overview of the *knowledge* that psychology has to offer to social work practice, and secondly, in Chapter 3 in particular, to provide a practical guide to interviewing and counselling, thus applying *skills which have been studied in psychology*.

Rowan Bayne has re-written Chapters 3 and 5 to include the most recent developments in these areas. There are new sections in Chapter 5 on psychological type, and in Chapter 3 on counselling and assertiveness. These two chapters (and to a lesser extent Chapter 4) are different in tone from the rest of the book. This partly reflects the distinct aim of these chapters which we intend to be guides to self-development of the particular skills, through complementing other forms of training rather than replacing them.

Paula Nicolson has substantially revised Chapters 1, 2, 6 and 9, and made minor revisions to Chapters 4, 7 and 8. The changes in the first two chapters reflect those in both disciplines, covering the way in which ideas from mainstream psychology now compete with psychoanalytic ones for a central place within social work theory, and the ways in which psychological research has been applied to social work problems. Chapter 6 has focussed upon the life course, particularly suggesting 'loss and change' as a continuing theme. It also takes account of research initiatives in the area of the psychology of women. Chapter 9 takes a fresh look at the future of psychology and social work in the light of preceding chapters.